

GUIDE TO WELLBEING



Immediate needs
Support for
Veterans facing
Hardship and distress

www.veteranscharity.org.uk

Registered Charity No.1123149

Wellbeing *noun* – State of being comfortable, happy and healthy

It is important to realise that wellbeing is much more than momentary happiness. While wellbeing includes happiness, it also includes important things such as how satisfied we are in life as a whole, our sense of purpose and how in control we feel of our lives and the issues that affect us.

There are many things we can all do to enable and manage better wellbeing. This guide has been produced to give some inspiration and tips on ways to help your wellbeing.

If at any time you feel you need support, please reach out to us!

Key steps to wellbeing

1. **Connect** with others
2. Be physically **active**
3. **Learn** and develop new skills
4. **Give** to others



1. Connect with others

Relationships, friendships and even interactions with strangers can have a positive impact on our mental wellbeing as well as enhance our social activities and help to build a supportive network. They are also a great way for us to benefit from supporting others.

Evidence shows that bonds that we have with others can provide a sense of belonging, feeling of being valued and can confirm our status and self-worth. Positive connections with other people are good for our mental health and wellbeing. Connecting is not only good for us because of the rewards it provides but, through connecting with others and building more meaningful relationships we can create a network of people to turn to if we do experience difficult times in our lives. Having a strong social network and support system of people that are there to listen and offer support can help us move forward from negative experiences with greater ease.

Maintaining a focus on connecting with others, even if only through a phone call, video chat or even a letter or email, is important to us all and can prevent a feeling of loneliness or isolation.

If you need support with the ability to connect to others, for example a smartphone/tablet or calling credit, please reach out via www.veteranscharity.org.uk/getsupport

2. Be physically active

As anyone who has served in the Armed Forces knows, PT can be good for our physical health and capabilities but, the importance of how it supports good mental health and general wellbeing is less often spoken about.

Being physically active does not necessarily mean running a BFT or spending 3 hours in the gym. What matters is that you undertake regular activity which increases your heart rate and breathing (to safe levels – always follow doctors orders if you have a health condition!) and gets your muscles moving.

Keeping a regular routine is crucial as well because it can boost confidence and provide a sense of purpose and achievement. If necessary, use post-it notes and reminders placed strategically around your home to prompt you to do various tasks, however simple or mundane they may be. Sometimes we all need a little motivation to get jobs done!

Avoid spending the day in bed or sat in your favourite armchair. Get up, move around your home and if you can, get out and go for a walk or even a run if you feel up to it. Cycling and swimming are great for lower impact activity if you have joint/leg/back issues and many people also find lighter exercising such as simple stretches, or yoga can be very beneficial as they help with circulation and flexibility.

The benefits of regular physical activity can be huge:

- Improves both physical and mental health
- Improves circulation
- Reduces stress
- Increases energy levels
- Aids better sleep

If you feel that you would benefit from support with clothing or footwear to enable better or more regular exercise, please reach out via www.veteranscharity.org.uk/getsupport



3. Learn new skills

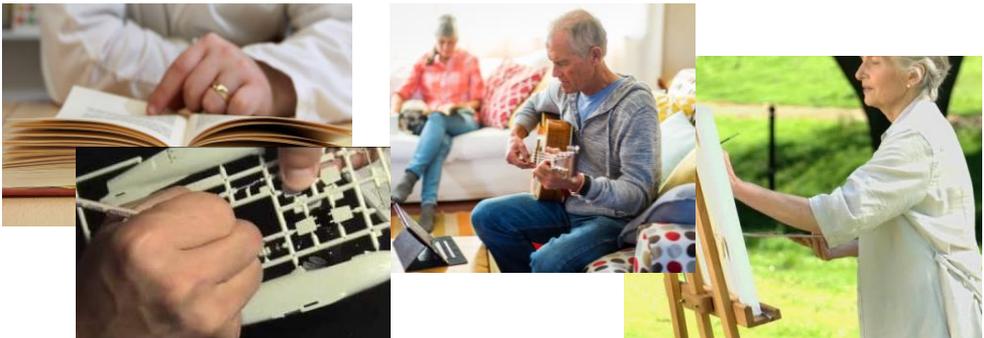
Learning is not just for children in schools or university students but it's good for our minds and mental wellbeing. Learning has been shown to have a number of benefits to our sense of wellbeing and life satisfaction.

There are a host of free and low cost online courses to undertake but you can also take up a new hobby or even rekindle an interest in something you have previously done.

Art, craft, model-making, gardening/DIY, learning a musical instrument, writing/blogging, photography... the list of things to try and to practice is almost endless.

Go for something you are likely to enjoy and not something that may become a chore over time.

Developing a new skill can be hugely rewarding and help to build confidence as well as self-esteem and is also great for a routine!



4. Give to others

Giving does not necessarily mean giving away money or valuable belongings but can be as simple as offering support and time to a stranger, friend, family member, a charitable organisation, our local community or our wider community. It can involve parting with material things like money and gifts, or immaterial things like our time, skills, knowledge, enthusiasm, passion and kindness.

In practice, giving can look like a number of things – it could mean supporting a friend with a problem, donating clothes or unused items to a charity, volunteering your time for a cause you care about, or simply trying to make more time for the people that you care about.

Think about how an act of giving from someone else has helped to lift your spirits in the past and how it may have made them feel good about

There are many factors that affect our wellbeing in general including our diet, activity levels, financial security, home environment, working life and family/relationships. All of these can impact our sleep, physical health, energy and stress levels.

There are many things we can each do to help manage these factors!

Eating regularly

Eating regularly and choosing foods that release energy slowly will help to keep your sugar levels steady. Eating breakfast gets the day off to a good start.

Instead of eating a large lunch and dinner, try eating smaller portions spaced out more regularly throughout the day.

Avoid foods which make your blood sugar rise and fall rapidly, such as sweets, biscuits, sugary drinks, and alcohol.

Staying hydrated

If you don't drink enough fluid, you may find it difficult to concentrate or think clearly. You might also start to feel constipated (which puts no one in a good mood).

It's recommended that you drink between 6–8 glasses of fluid a day. Water is a cheap and healthy option.

Tea, coffee, juices and smoothies all count towards your intake (but be aware that these may also contain caffeine or sugar).

Managing caffeine

Caffeine is a stimulant, which will give you a quick burst of energy, but can then make you feel anxious and depressed, disturb your sleep or give you withdrawal symptoms if you stop suddenly.

Caffeine is in: tea, coffee, chocolate, cola and other manufactured energy drinks.

If you drink tea, coffee or cola, try switching to decaffeinated versions. You might feel noticeably better if you drink less caffeine or avoid it altogether.

Eating the right fats

Your brain needs fatty acids (such as omega-3 and -6) to keep it working well. So rather than avoiding all fats, it's important to eat the right ones.

Healthy fats are found in: oily fish, poultry, nuts (especially walnuts and almonds), olive and sunflower oils, seeds (such as sunflower and pumpkin), avocados, milk, yoghurt, cheese and eggs.

*Source – www.mind.org.uk

Affording adequate food provisions is often a struggle for people who find themselves in hardship. In 2020 alone, we provided 644 food shopping deliveries to Veterans (and their families) who were struggling to buy food.

If you find yourself facing the prospect of going without food or having to rely on a food bank handout, please reach out via

www.veteranscharity.org.uk/getsupport



In addition to managing our physical health, looking after our mental health is crucial but can often be our biggest challenge.

Sometimes, it is vital to reach out for professional support to help us to improve our mental health.

There is no mental health condition that cannot be improved but seeking support at the right time is important. Thankfully, there are organisations that provide mental health support to Veterans in a variety of ways.

Please use the following links to seek support if you are finding it hard to manage.

<https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/armed-forces-and-veterans-healthcare/veterans-nhs-mental-health-services/>

We highly recommend the Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILs) and the new High Intensity Service (HIS) so please follow the information and links to access the teams in your area.

www.ptsdresolution.org - PTSD Resolution is a charity (no. 1133118) that helps Veterans, Reservists and Families who are struggling to reintegrate into a normal work & family life because of trauma suffered during service in the armed forces.

The programme is community-based, with treatment and support provided locally through a nationwide network of 200 therapists, accredited by the Professional Standards Authority.

www.combatstress.org.uk - Today we provide specialist treatment and support for veterans from every service and conflict, focusing on those with complex mental health issues related to their military service.

www.allcallsigns.org - All Call Signs is an award-winning peer support organisation for veterans and serving military personnel. Our chat app is manned by over 500 volunteer listeners with experience of life in uniform and our digital caseworkers bridge the gaps in veteran's mental health services for hundreds of users seeking help.

www.icaruscharity.org - ICARUS on-line is a completely free Psychological Therapy and Counselling service for anyone who has served in the Armed Forces. It's a Veteran-to-Veteran service. All the Therapists have served themselves and have complete understanding of the Military ethos and what it's like to have been on active service.

www.rock2recovery.co.uk - Our mission is to save and change the lives of those in our Armed Forces, our veteran community and their families who are affected by stress. Our approach is to inspire, coach and motivate towards a more positive future.

Activity-based support

www.detecting4veterans.org - Detecting for veterans was formed in 2017 to bring together veterans from all corners of the UK who share a passion for metal detecting. This hobby has proven for many veterans to be a gateway to building friendships improving mental health helping with PTSD and shares a love of this fantastic hobby and we are proud to support and welcome all those who feel they would benefit from the friendship and camaraderie you will experience with our group.

www.veteransinaction.org.uk - For over a decade Veterans In Action have run a series of long-distance walking and vehicle-borne expeditions for veterans who have suffered the effects of war or who have found the transition to civilian life difficult. The projects, adventurous activities and expeditions immerse veterans into an environment they understand with their peers that enables them to grow, helping each other every step of the way.

Grounding techniques are a valuable tool in managing anxiety. One of the most popular and effective methods is the '54321' method as set out below. Try to practice this whenever you may be feeling anxious. Many people even find it a useful resource to aid better sleep and practice it when going to bed.

Take a few slow and deep breaths and describe each thing in detail, taking time to do it. If you need to, say them out loud. Take a few more slow and deep breaths afterwards. Repeat as often as you need to.

FIVE SENSES

What are



5

THINGS YOU
CAN SEE



Ideas ↘
SUN
PICTURE ON THE WALL
PEOPLE
WALKING

4

THINGS YOU
CAN FEEL



WIND
BLOWING
FEET ON THE FLOOR
PENCIL IN HAND

3

THINGS YOU
CAN HEAR



BIRDS
CHIRPING
CLOCK TICKING
CAR HORNS

2

THINGS YOU
CAN SMELL



FOOD FROM THE
CAFETERIA
LAUNDRY DETERGENT ON CLOTHES
FRESH CUT
GRASS

1

THING YOU
CAN TASTE



MINT
Breakfast
TOOTHPASTE

This technique can help you regain a sense of calmness and clarity. It requires at least 3 minutes, and ideally a space with a degree of privacy or anonymity.

- **Stand and close your eyes**
- **Become aware of your breathing**
- **Follow the rhythm of your breathing and settle into your body becoming aware of any physical sensations**
- **Wriggle or shift your weight as often as you need to**
- **Then become aware of your feet on ground. Feel the ground. Soften your feet and let go of tension.**
- **Let this awareness travel up your body. Softening joints as it passes, through the ankles, knees, the hips and upwards**
- **Then do the same from your fingertips, following the sense of awareness up your arms to your shoulders. Letting go of tension and tightness.**
- **Then into your head. Look out for tension in the jaw and facial muscles. Make you're your teeth are unclenched, and not touching. Let your breathing soften the facial muscles and smile.**
- **Let your attention now settle back into the pelvic region and remain quiet and still for a short period, say 30 to 60 secs.**
- **Open your eyes and tries to retain some of that softness.**

* [Source = people.nhs.uk](http://people.nhs.uk)

#reachout



When you were serving, calling for support during difficult times was the way forward. It's no different in civvy street. Reach out...



Immediate needs support for Veterans facing hardship

"The Rapid Reaction Force"

www.veteranscharity.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 1123149

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